

AI-based chatbots in customer service and their effects on user compliance

Year: 2020 | Citations: 772 | Authors: Martin Adam, Michael Wessel, Alexander Benlian

Abstract

Communicating with customers through live chat interfaces has become an increasingly popular means to provide real-time customer service in many e-commerce settings. Today, human chat service agents are frequently replaced by conversational software agents or chatbots, which are systems designed to communicate with human users by means of natural language often based on artificial intelligence (AI). Though cost- and time-saving opportunities triggered a widespread implementation of AI-based chatbots, they still frequently fail to meet customer expectations, potentially resulting in users being less inclined to comply with requests made by the chatbot. Drawing on social response and commitment-consistency theory, we empirically examine through a randomized online experiment how verbal anthropomorphic design cues and the foot-in-the-door technique affect user request compliance. Our results demonstrate that both anthropomorphism as well as the need to stay consistent significantly increase the likelihood that users comply with a chatbot's request for service feedback. Moreover, the results show that social presence mediates the effect of anthropomorphic design cues on user compliance.